



*Desdemona's Discovery*, as written by Charise Castro Smith and directed by Emma Ramos, was a way-back-when, way-far-out play with Sofia Santoni as a 19th Century seafarer confronted with a stowaway extraterrestrial, played by Jayda Camacho.



*Through the Wall* by Chisa Hutchinson, was unflinchingly realistic and up-to-the-minute in January of 2017. Kai Ceniza and Maria Martinez, under Sathya Sridharan's direction, were two siblings dealing with the impact of new immigration policies.





◄ Emily Roman was a detective whose specialty was feelings while Ricardo Currin was the obsessive partner who couldn't stop hunting the Manhattan werewolf in Michael Bernard's *There Wolf*, directed by Mat Hostetler.

► In Used-To-Be-Human University, by Nick Mills, Matthew Orozco was a disaffected zombie who took a journey into his own fear-addled brain with the help of his well-adjusted vampire teacher Karen Tineo. George Babiak directed.

## SHINE A LIGHT: THE HOPEFUL PLAYS

The 2017 Two-On-Twos

Every January, the "2-on-2s" match 6 pairs of kids with adult playwrights and directors. The plays were rehearsed in Bridgehampton and performed Jan. 27-29, 2017 at the Five Angels Theater.

## THE DESIGN AND TECH TEAM

Rona Siddiqui Co	mposer/Music Director
Ntokozo Fuzunina Kunene	Costumes
Josh Langman	I jahtina
Margaret Fortuna Yassky	Sound
Valerie Insardi	Stage Manager

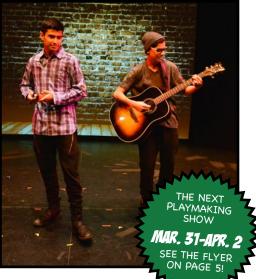
### THE HOST FAMILIES

Alex Gersten-Vassilaros, Laurie Becker, and Cheri & Michael Friedman.

◄ Sarah Hammond's *Tuesdays on Mars* had Sasha Davis and Tiffany Miller as Martian TV hosts assigned to blow up a backward planet named Earth, but not feeling very excited about it. Kimiye Corwin directed.

► Joshua Gomez and Ezekiel Albarron were two boys who took refuge from a monster in Jesse Liebman's *Bunker Brothers*, directed by KeiLyn Durrel Jones. While holed up, a photo of Zeke's abuela gave them clues to the source of their demons.





YOUR OFFICIAL RECAP OF THE LAST FOUR MONTHS OF PROJECT HISTORY.

# FALL PLAYMAKING - DEC. 2016 - KIDS WRITE, ADULTS PERFORM

Aengus O'Donnell's *The Adventure of Snowball and Pine* was a fight-filled extravaganza that pitted a feisty forest deer (Jose Joaquin Perez) against a discontented arctic harp seal (Michael Propster). There were also hunters and a huge foamcore orca. Tim J. Lord directed.



An adventure-seeking candle (Naomi Lorrain) and a fearful teacup (Kaaron Briscoe) went on a far-reaching quest for their heart's desires in Jade Johnson's *The Hike*, directed by Arielle Goldman.

# INFINITY AND BEYOND: THE ULTIMATE PLAYS

THE FALL 2016 PLAYMAKING SHOWS One of our most popular formats, Playmaking teams up our youngest kids with seasoned adult actors to create zany and utterly unpredictable new plays. This batch was written on a retreat in Stone Rldge, NY, and performed Dec. 2-4 at the Five Angels.

## THE DESIGN AND TECH TEAM

Avi Amon Co	omposer/Music Director
Carisa Kelly & Michael Piatk	owskiCostumes
Greg MacPherson	Lighting
MuTTT L. Dogg	Sound
Mulli L. Dogg	Stope Manager
Jenny Peek	

## THE HOST FAMILIES

Steve Gorn & Barbara Bash, Deborah Freedman & Bill Woods, Nicole & Paul Quinn, Jeff Madalena & Jason Gnewikow, Elaine Musselman, Tracey Dewart & Michel Eckersley, Amanda Van Doorene, Zorian & Alla Pinsky, Natalie Merchant & John Bowermaster, and Iris Brown, Joe White, & Walker White.



Arden Wolfe's *Becoming a Manager*, directed by Rachel Dart, gave us insights into the working lives of Mexican food. Jenelle Chu, the taco, and Morgan Everitt, the burrito, both got heated up over their mutual ambitions to manage the store they worked in.



In Morgan Smalls' *The 2 and 3 Musketeers*, a girl with three nostrils (Jennifer Van Dyck) and a girl with three eyes (Mozhan Marnò) somehow sense that they share a common bond. Eventually, they celebrated their friendship in song. Alexandra O'Daly directed.



Werewolves and deer are in vogue this year! Omar Metwally and Sue Jean Kim played the title roles in Aaron Ordinola's *Laycayon the Werewolf and Hadi the Deer,* directed by John Sheehy. They helped each other overcome their problems.



Hannah Leon's *Friends Forever* gave us a play closer to home than many of the others. A boy (Taylor Trensch) and a girl (Helen Cespedes) realize how much they enjoy each other's company in school, get separated, and then find their way back to each other again. Michelle Taliento dramaturged while Natalie Hirsch directed.

PLAYMAKING PHOTOGRAPHS BY WINSTON RODNEY

PROJECT UPDATE, MARCH 2017

#### PLAYMAKING, CONTINUED:





Ryan Billah's *The Job Conflict*, directed by Kareem Lucas, was so sweeping that we need two photos: at left, a frog (Jeremy Rishe) engaged in an ice cream making contest with a chicken and a tiger (George Babiak and Jayleen Velez) while at right, his prospective snake employer (David Shih) decided on the winner with his fellow judges (snake Michelle Taliento and frog Julio Chavez).

Not enough snakes for ya? Ahmed Shabana's *Silly and Boa* told the simple tale of two serpent brothers (Ruffin Prentiss III and Michael Salinas) loved each other but could not live together. Former Proj intern turned loyal volunteer Jose Gamo directed.



Where are the girl vampires? RIght here, played by Kate Abbruzzese and Annie Purcell in Love Jones' *The Swap*, directed by Nicole A. Watson. After a good deal of conflict, they found their groove in Happy Dance Land.

ONCE MORE FROM THE TOPI 1,2,3,4...



In Messiah Green's *Brothers in Disguise?*, two long-lost siblings (Ben Mehl and Stephen O'Reilly) one fabulously rich, the other desperately poor, met by chance on a bus, took a cross-country journey in a BMW, and found out they were both undercover agents. Jonathan Bock directed.

To honor board co-chairs Cathy Dantchik and Louis P. Friedman and former board chairs Wendy Ettinger, Stephen Graham, and Frances McDormand we ask you to take a seat and save the date for...

SICH.

Monday, May 8, 2017 at the Edison Ballroom

A benefit celebrating The 52nd Street Project's 35th Anniversary featuring songs written by 52nd Street Project kids Sabrina Caldona, Ricardo Currin, Ayman Musa, and Rosneyri Rosario. For more information, contact John "La-Z-Boy" Sheehy at sheehy@52project.org

# WELCOME, KALI AND YAZZY!

Hey, it's time to welcome some bubbly, bright, and bold, new staff members to the big lunch table!

# Kali Crandall – Development Director

Kali (rhymes with "daily" not "Dali") joins us from NYU's Center for Ballet and the Arts where she held the positions of Associate and Manager of Events, Communications, and Development. Previously, Kali was the Executive Assistant to the Executive Director at the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, and has held the positions of Manager of Institutional Giving and Development Associate & Operations Manager at RIOULT Dance NY. Kali holds a Master's Degree in Arts and Cultural Management with a focus in non-profit administration from Pratt Institute and received a B.A. from the University of Rochester in Brain & Cognitive Science and Studio Arts. Kali will be in charge of our fundraising department, and now that she's here, we're as good as gold.

# Yazzy Wilder – Office Manager

Yazzy (rhymes with "jazzy" not "Yahtzee") is a former 52nd Street Project kid and the first recipient of The Henry and Gloria Jacobs Scholarship, a full scholarship to the University of Michigan for qualified alumni of The 52nd Street Project. She graduated in 2009 with a BA in Economics and has worked in both sales and banking since then. At the University of Michigan, she was one of the organizers of The Latino Culture Show, and was on the fundraising team for F.O.K.U.S. (Fighting Obstacles Knowing Ultimate Success) whose mission is to educate, empower, and unite communities by using traditional and non-traditional forms of art. Yazzy began working with the Project in October 2016 and in her first staff meeting she told everyone "It feels great to be back, I feel like I never left." Yazzy is also the proud mom of 3-year old Julian, who thinks he's in charge of the Clubhouse office.

# AND IN OTHER STAFF NEWS...

### As a Project Pal, you should have received the following letter from Carol, Natalie, and Gus. If you didn't, here it is again.

The 52nd Street Project has had a lot of good news over the course of its 35 years. Willie Reale, our Founder and first Artistic Director, decides to work with kids in Hell's Kitchen. Those kids decide that this is a fun and satisfying way to spend a good chunk of their free time. So do a bunch of Willie's pals. More kids and more pals join the rumpus. The rumpus is enjoyed by many makers, young and old(er). Then we move into our current home, with a lot of room to do new things and to keep doing all the other things we love, but better.

For many years, people have been contacting us, wanting to know more about what we do: how; why; can others do this too; can the Project participate in this or that other thing? At long last we are ready to fully respond, and to spend more time meeting, discussing, and exchanging with like-minded people and other organizations.

So we've been busy switching some roles here. The Project's second Artistic Director, Gus Rogerson, will become Producing Director, guiding these new opportunities, and continuing to lead alongside Executive Director Carol Ochs, now in her 25th year of keeping the doors open.

Which brings us to yet more good news. The 52nd Street Project's third Artistic Director is Natalie Hirsch, formerly

PROJECT UPDATE, MARCH 2017

our Associate A.D. She brings her great gifts of attention and integrity and some kind of wonderful magic that makes gatherings of kids and adults guite lighthearted. We are thrilled that the Project's precious day to day is now under her leadership, both process and product. Kids and volunteers, artists and audiences, will all be in very good hands.

Director of Development & Marketing John Sheehy, he of long and devoted service, will become Director of Institutional Advancement, joining Gus in taking the Project beyond our four walls in new ways, that include sharing our vast content more widely, and connecting more deeply with our community.

We are glad to welcome our new Director of Development, Kali Crandall, most recently from NYU's Center for Ballet and the Arts. She has arrived with impressive bona fides and ready enthusiasm. Feel free at any time to write a check for the Project to get her off to a good start.

We're all very excited to be moving forward. Come by sometime in this new year and see what's the rumpus.



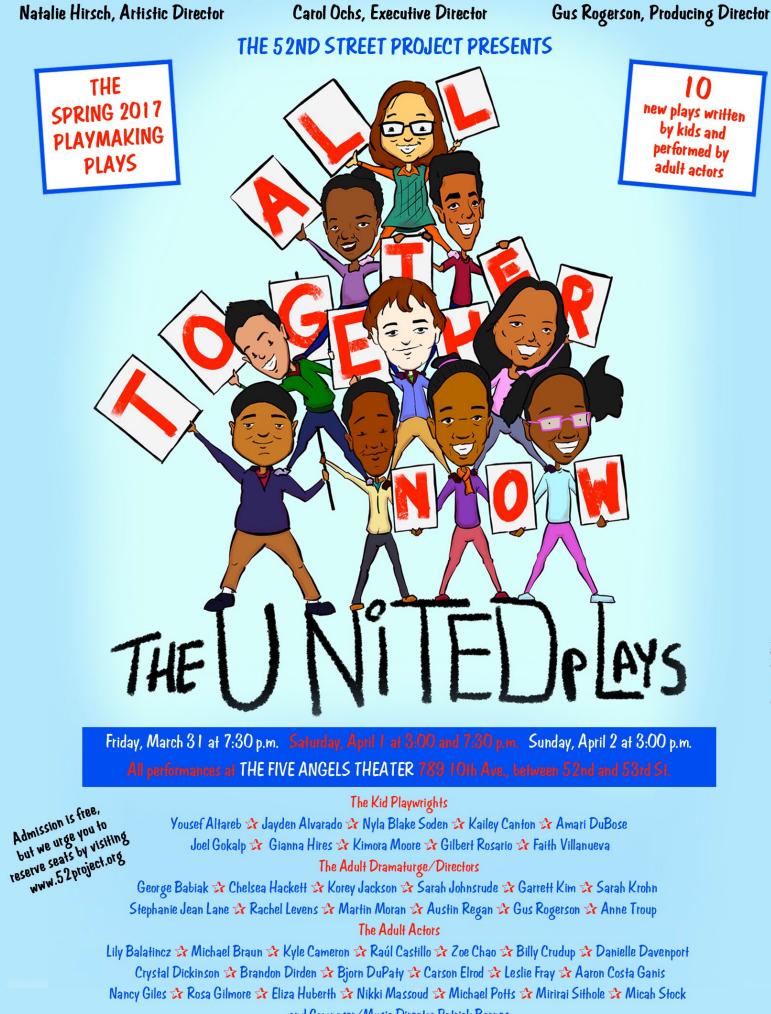


Carol



Gus





and Composer/Music Director Patrick Barnes

Artwork by Nick Choksi

# STORYTELLING



On Nov. 20, 6 kids presented personal stories at the Five Angels that they told a la "The Moth." The narratives were all drawn from the kids' personal lives in Garrett Kim's 7-week Storytelling class. They also had the help of adult partners who gently steered them through the process.



Lost on the Fourth of July Thiana Goode and Lynne Rosenberg All about misplacing your parents.



PS4 Rodery Rosario and Marco Formosa Will I get the Christmas gift I want?



The Surprise Nicole Quiles and Joanna Parson Spoiler: it's a new baby sister!



The Stitches Gage Simmons and Nico Grelli What it's like to really gash your knee.



The V.I.P.E. Sevan Asencio and Kareem Lucas On seeing a really big sporting event.



New Day, New Me Beyonce Thomas and Julio Chavez How to stand your ground in school.

# THE 17TH ANNUAL SMART PARTNERS PING-PONG TOURNAMENT - FEB. 10, 2017



"PANTSUIT TURTLES Sathya Sridharan & Stevens Velasguez



"CATCH THEM ALL" George Babiak & Karen Tineo



**"THE HOMIES** Darby O'Donnell & Sarah Johnsrude



**"MINE TURTLES** Tim J. Lord & Emmanuel Goicuria



"UNINTENTIONALLY AGGRESSIVE" Wilhelmina Ohene Kari Kari & Lindsay Torrey



**'GALAXY GALS'** Hannah Leon & Helen Cespedes



"JELLYFAM, INC." Ethan Perez & Josh Moody



"THE RESISTANCE" Joshua Gomez & Stephen O'Reilly



"THE P.J.'S 2.0' Joseph Cruz & Paul Coffey



"LE PING AND LE PONG" Ashley Marie Ortiz & Rosneyri Rosario



"WISH WE'D PLAYED LESS FOOSBALL LAST MONTH" Jayleen Velez & Daiva Deupree



"WITHOUT A PADDLE" Kamil Kuzminski & Rory Scholl



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2017 marks the 25th year of Carol's reign as our beloved Executive Director. To honor her, we turned the Five Angels Theater into a karaoke bar for one night on Feb. 13. Although Carol hates to vocalize even more than she hates to act, we took the sting out of the sing by using the party to raise some funds for the Project. Carol's aptly chosen number, which closed the show, was the Beatles' "With a Little Help from my Friends." Here are some photos of just a few of those friends.



Hosts Michael Potts and Zabryna Guevara bantered wittily as they peppered the singers with trivia questions about Carol Ellen Ochs.

For the first time in history, all three artistic directors of the Project performed together. Gus Rogerson, Natalie Hirsch, and Willie Reale sang "*That's Amore.*"

John Sheehy, our newly re-titled Director of Institutional Advancement, sang "*Delilah*," made famous by Tom Jones, and now even famouser thanks to Mr. S.



Lewis Black didn't sing, but he listened well, as did Eric Karpeles and Mike Sell, in the background.



Anne Troup, Marinda Anderson, and Arielle Goldman did a killer rendition of "She Works Hard for the Money," the evening's theme song.



Karin Schall and Mary Pat Walsh, two of Carol's BFF's, bounded to the stage just to nuzzle CEO.



NYU Provost Katherine Fleming sang "*Bye Bye Love*."



Frances McDormand showed us a clip from *Madagascar* 3 in which she sang "*Je ne Regrette Rien.*"



Past and current board chairs Wendy Ettinger and Cathy Dantchik were there to enjoy the songfest. They, Fran, Louis P. Friedman, and Stephen Graham will be honored at our big gala in May (see page 3).



Ben Moss "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" a song.



Education Director Liz Bell sang "Do Right Woman."





The chickens have come home to roost and so have Matt Saldivar and Sarna Lapine, who got hitched on Nov. 27, 2016. Matt has done countless Project plays (most recently as a giant zombie-robot-chicken-dinosaur) and Sarna has been a director for us.

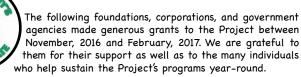


Laura Lane, former staff member, went to work for Planned Parenthood last year and is now a parent! Noelle Lane Cahill was born to Laura and her husband Matt Cahill on Dec. 29, 2016.



▲ Please welcome Ava Rose Melone Mills, born to Nick MIIIs and Ashley Melone on December 8th, 2016. Nick says, ► Here is Adrianna Angelica Jackson, born on Feb. "she was a wee 5 lbs., 11 oz. but has almost doubled her size in her first two months of life." The photos at right dem- 1, 2017 to Azalea Rosario and her fiance Jonathan onstrate her increase in mass dramatically. According to our calculations, if Ava kept doubling her weight every two Jackson. According to Azalea, "she loves to look at months, she'd be over 20,000 lbs. at the age of 2! Yikes!

vibrant lights and the pages in her story books."



Altman Foundation	\$35,000
Bull's Head Foundation	
The Brenner Family Foundation	\$10,000
Cramer Fund	\$1,000
Distracted Globe Foundation	\$30,000
Dramatists Play Service	\$1,000
Fidelity Charitable	\$10,000
Frederick Loewe Foundation	\$5,000
Mystery Alley	\$2,000
Newman's Own Foundation	
Ruth Nelson Family Foundation	\$2,000
UBS Financial Services	\$1,000
Vanguard Charitable	\$2,000
Yorke Construction Corporation	

# HIP, HIP, HARU!



The newest branch of the restaurant and sushi bar Haru just opened in Hell's Kitchen. We are thrilled to have been selected as their Community Partner. As you can see, our Haru buddies started things off with a really big donation! Literally! Behind the giant check for \$10,000 are Kali Crandall, Frances McDormand, Carol Ochs, Board Co-Chair Louis P. Friedman, and Gus Rogerson.

# IN MEMORIAM

# **KEVIN GEER**

## Nov. 7, 1952 - JAN. 25, 2017

The 52nd Street Project mourns the loss of Kevin Geer, who was a great friend, a tireless volunteer, and an off-the-charts Playmaking actor. Over the course of 18 years, he played, among other things: a female contestant (in a blonde rubber wig) on a game show hosted by a giraffe (Oliver Platt); a child who was also a Mexican wrestler carrying a speaking puppet of himself, lost in the woods with a deer (Edie Falco); and in two boxing plays, he was in the first a boxer in love with a dancer (Nancy Giles), in the second play, straight out of Playhouse 90, he played a washed-up trainer working with a young boxer (Armando Riesco). All of them were wildly funny, deeply felt and fully realized. We will miss him very much. If we had a Hall of Fame, he'd be in on the first ballot. -GR

John Sheehy and Kevin Geer in *The Boxer and the Dancer*, 2004.

# NEIL DESENA

### NOVEMBER 6, 1964 - FEB. 11, 2017

Neil, the devoted husband of 52nd Street Project board member Carolyn DeSena and the father of their three children, was taken from us very suddenly recently at the age of 52. Neil was Managing Partner of SenaHill Partners, a merchant bank he co-founded in 2013 after decades of experience in several Wall Street firms. He was known in his profession as an early pioneer of electronic trading, but we remember him best as a tireless advocate for the Project. He was a dominant figure at the many fund-raising golf tournaments that we held over the years in his native Bayonne. Neil could always be counted on to coax and cajole his fellow duffers into kicking in extra donations and we will always remember his expansive personality and devotion to our cause. -GB







DISCOVERT OF FIRE

## JAMES STEVENSON

#### JULY 11, 1929 - FEBRUARY 17, 2017

James Stevenson was an impressively talented author and illustrator who published over 100 children's books and created countless cartoons for The New Yorker magazine, the first one of which was published in 1956. Jim and his lovely wife Josie Merck were literary luminaries of Block Island, the oldest of The 52nd Street Project's destinations. Jim and Josie hosted volunteers and staff members many times over the years at their beautiful compound on Corn Neck Road. Jim also contributed artwork for dozens of flyers and fundraising campaigns. He even wrote a play for us once and we still have the foamcore prop suitcase he whipped up for it. Jim was a gentle, thoughtful, and generous man, and we extend our sympathies to his family at this time. -GB

## JUDITH WRIGHT DAWKINS NOVEMBER 21, 1938 - FEBRUARY 8, 2017

Judi Dawkins, as we knew her, was the loving mom of board member Noël Mihalow and a long-standing supporter of the Project. She was born in Washington, D.C. and married Peter Miller Dawkins, a West Point graduate, soon after receiving a degree in textile design from the University of Maryland. As a military wife, Judi moved her family around the country 21 times. She balanced family life with an array of pursuits, including being a real estate agent in five states, a ski instructor, a skipper and sailing instructor, and a research assistant at the Stanford Hopkins Marine Station. After Pete retired from the military, Judi dedicated herself to philanthropic causes in the communities around her, of which the Project was just one. She is survived by Pete, Noël, son-in-law Joe, daughter-in-law Winkie, and six grandchildren.



Flyen Ban Se Profile





Occupation- Composer, pianist, music director, teacher...

- What he does for us- In just two short years, Avi Amon has taken on composing and music directing for no less than six major Project projects, including a One-on-One, a Two-on-Two, two Playmaking shows, a Teen Shakespeare show, and our inaugural Songmaking program.
- Why he does what he does- "This is such a complicated question! Making art is about connection and discovering deeper truths within me and others. It's about forcing myself to be vulnerable when I don't want to (because that's a good thing) and appreciating beauty in all of its forms. But on a much simpler note, I've tried plenty of other jobs and this is the one where I feel the most sane. So far. I think I'll keep doing it!"
- **Hobbies-** "Gardening outside, gardening inside, trying to bake bread as well as Kim Sherman (another famed Project composer), riding bikes, making furniture, friendship. And hanging out with cats."
- Last book read- "The entire internet. Moving back to books very soon."
- Most recent accomplishment- "If I described the batch of cookies I just made as breathtaking, would you believe me? Also - some wonderful people helped workshop one of my musicals as part of the Yale Institute for Musical Theater this summer. Very excited to see what happens next."
- **Best Project Memory-** "Working with three 52nd St Project Kids and three NYU graduate composers during SongMaking was incredible. Such brilliant new work being showcased! Block Island was pretty great too - the community we created will stay with me forever."

Credo- "Question everything. (Is this a credo?)"

- Advice to kids- "If you could somehow bottle up all the imagination and possibility you have inside of you now, and then continue to release and use it as you get older, you'll be set for life. And I'm not talking about Neverland. I'm talking about your genius and how it inspires us adults every day."
- Place of birth- "Chicago, Illinois." Habitat- "Bed-Stuy!"
- Favorite thing about the Project- "It's my place for magic, joy, and arguably the best theater in NYC."
- On Flyer Bars- "I have something to confess I STILL haven't tried a Flyer bar. I have no good reason for this, other than being a dummy. My one and only New Years' resolution is to change this."



Stone Ridge: It takes two days to write a great play. Love and Aengus are dramaturged by Nicole and Tim.



Luckily, there are lots of breaks. Jade, Love, Arden, and Morgan take the air in the Bash-Gorn yard.



Aaron thinks the local indoor skating rink is a great afternoon activity.



Bridgehampton: Rona teaches Ezekiel his song, and director KeiLyn is really into it.



A hike? Ya gotta be kidding ... guess it beats rehearsing.



**Back in the Clubhouse**: Some of us spent a week doing improv with a few of the teens. May we make it an every-day activity, please?